centres including High Speed Data Communication facilities across the country. STPI centres have been set up at Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Bhilai (Chhattisgarh).

Impact on IT boom

1713 SHRIMATI. JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Computer Programme Patenting in terms of the Indian Patent Act introduced by a recent Ordinance permitting all computer programmes to be patented is likely to hit IT boom in India;

(b) whether Government have examined the implications of the Ordinance as the Software patenting is likely to kill innovations by leaving small firms or software developer liable for patent infringement;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir. A computer programme *per se* other than its technical application to industry or a combination with hardware, is excluded from Patentability, and these are covered under the Indian Copyright Act. The Ordinance in so far as Computer Programmes are concerned, provides clarification to the existing Patent (Amendment) Act, 2002.

(b) to (d) Since Patent Protection, if any, is only territorial in nature, the said Ordinance is not likely to kill innovations by small firms or software developers.

Reduction of investment in telephone projects

†1714. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited is considering to reduce its investment in telephone projects for rural areas;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.